

Diego “Nightmare” Sanchez

Born December 31,1981 Albuquerque, New Mexico

High School: Del Norte High School 2002

High School

- 2002 State Wrestling Champion

Professionally

- After high school he started training mixed martial arts while working for UPS.
- Sanchez eventually joined Jackson’s Submission Fighting, still while working for UPS, managing the time between work and training.
- Involved in more “Fight of the Year” bouts than any other fighter in MMA. his first against Karo Parisyan at UFC Fight Night 6, then again opposite Clay Guida at The Ultimate Fighter 9 Finale (which culminated into a title shot against then-UFC Lightweight Champion B.J. Penn, where the two headlined UFC 107), and finally against Gilbert Melendez at UFC 166.
- One of only three fighters in history to compete in four different weight classes in the UFC: Middleweight, Welterweight, Lightweight, and Featherweight the others being Kenny Florian, and BJ Penn (who has competed in Featherweight, Lightweight, Welterweight and Middleweight classes).
- 2002 MMA debut in 2002 in the promotion Ring of Fire, despite having injured his heel the night before. Sanchez mostly went for takedowns, while his opponent, who was a more developed striker, bloodied the young Sanchez. However, Sanchez continued to use his wrestling expertise, landed another takedown in the second round, taking his opponent’s back, then sinking in a rear-naked choke, causing his opponent to tap. This made Sanchez the winner by submission, who then earned \$600 for the bout.
- Went on to compile an undefeated 11-0 record before becoming a contestant on The Ultimate Fighter.
- Ultimate Fighter:
 - 2005 April Sanchez beat Kenny Florian by TKO in two minutes and 49 seconds of the first round to win the middleweight division winner in the first season of the reality show, The Ultimate Fighter. The Ultimate Fighter show was an American reality television

series and mixed martial arts (MMA) competition produced by Fox Sports 1 and the Ultimate Fighting Championship presented as a young, focused middleweight who only had one goal, to become a UFC He won a contract with the UFC after defeating fellow finalist Kenny Florian via TKO, becoming the middleweight winner for the first season of the show. On the show, Sanchez was known for being the “odd-ball” of the group, practicing yoga at odd moments and trying to extract “energy” from a lightning storm, and was also a self-proclaimed “Zen master “

○ Welterweight Division

- 2005 August 20 at the MGM Grand Arenain Las Vegas, Nevada, Sanchez made his post-TUF debut defeating journeyman Brian Gassaway by submission due to strikes at UFC 54.
- 2005 November 5. Sanchez next defeated Nick Diazvia unanimous decision at The Ultimate Fighter 2 Finale.
- 2006 May 27, Sanchez won a unanimous decision over John Alessio at UFC 60.
- 2006 August 17 Sanchez continued his undefeated streak with a unanimous decision victory over judo specialist Karo Parisyan at UFC Fight Night 6. This fight earned him the Fight of the Night award.
- 2006 December 13 Sanchez faced Joe Riggs in the main event of UFC Fight Night 7. Sanchez landed a right hook that knocked Riggs down, followed by a running knee that knocked Riggs out at 1:45 of the first round. Sanchez subsequently tested positive for the agents found in marijuana and was sentenced to a three-month suspension.
- Sanchez was then cleared to fight Josh Koscheckat UFC 69. At the weigh-ins for the event, Sanchez shoved Koscheck while they stared each other down. Sanchez ended up losing a unanimous decision to Koscheck, ending his undefeated run, in a fight that was virtually all stand up. Koscheck managed to keep Sanchez at bay with superior hand speed and footwork until the bout timed out, to take the win 30–27 on all three judges’ cards. Several weeks after the fight, Dana White announced that Sanchez was sick on the eve of the fight and almost had to retire when a test came

- back indicating he had Hepatitis C. Doctors eventually concluded the test results were not correct, but could not diagnose his sickness, so the fight went ahead as planned. The day after the fight Sanchez had a hole in his thigh the “size of a coffee cup” and was diagnosed with a staph infection.
- 2007 September 22 In his next bout, Sanchez lost his second straight fight by split decision to Jon Fitch at UFC 76, before rebounding against David Bielkheden at UFC 82 with a submission win in the first round due to strikes. Following the win, Sanchez stopped Luigi Fioravanti via TKO due to strikes at 4:07 of the third round at The Ultimate Fighter 7 Finale. After pulling out of a fight with Thiago Alves due to an injury, Sanchez announced he would be moving to the lightweight division.
 - Lightweight division
 - 2009 February 21 He made his lightweight debut in his next fight at UFC 95 against Joe Stevenson. Training for the bout Sanchez worked with professional boxers Joey Gilbert and Lupe Aquino, Brazilian grappling experts Xande and Saulo Ribeiro and wrestling coach Bob Anderson. Although Stevenson pressed the action throughout the bout, Sanchez landed the better strikes and won by unanimous decision. Diego credits Tony Robbins for giving him mental preparation for this latest fight and was seen entering the bout chanting “Yes!” repeatedly. This would go on to inspire the “Yes!” chant, popularized by professional wrestler, Daniel Bryan.
 - 2009 June 20 Sanchez won a split-decision victory against Clay Guida at the finale of The Ultimate Fighter: United States vs. United Kingdom Finale. Sanchez won Fight of the Night honors, his second such award in a row. Opening with a seemingly endless barrage of jabs and right uppercuts for the first minute he shook Guida, in the first round Sanchez also connected with a head kick that floored his opponent. Sanchez maintained a superior standup through the first round and the rest of the fight, though Guida rallied and made a contest of the next two rounds in a closely contested match. The fight went on to win “Fight of the Year” by several MMA magazines and the UFC.

- 2009 December 12, At UFC 107, Sanchez fought and lost to BJ Penn for the UFC Lightweight Championship. Early in the first round, Penn landed a right hand that dropped Sanchez, followed by a flurry of punches that almost prompted referee Herb Dean to stop the fight. Although Sanchez was able to recover enough to stay in the bout, he was outclassed in the following four rounds that saw Penn dominate with superior stand up, whilst all 27 takedown attempts made by Sanchez were negated by Penn's superior defense. Early in the fifth round, Penn landed a head kick that caused a large cut to be opened on the forehead of Sanchez. Herb Dean called the action to a halt for doctor's advice and the fight ended at 2:37 by TKO, marking the first time Sanchez has been stopped in a fight. This also marked only the second fight in UFC history to end in the fifth round. At the post-fight press conference, UFC President Dana White was quoted saying Sanchez was "about as busted up as I've ever seen a guy." Sanchez had his bottom lip completely split open, with his left eye swollen shut and a large cut above his left eyebrow.
- Return to Welterweight
 - 2010 May 29 Sanchez returned to the welterweight division and faced John Hathaway, at UFC 114. In the first round of the fight, Hathaway caught Sanchez with a knee to the head as Sanchez attempted a takedown. Hathaway then dominated with ground and pound while all of Sanchez's takedown attempts were negated by Hathaway's strength. The rest of the fight saw Hathaway utilize his superior striking reach, giving him the unanimous decision (30–27, 30–27, 30–26), handing Sanchez his second consecutive loss.
 - 2010 October 23 Sanchez rejoined Jackson's Submission Fighting for his next fight with Paulo Thiago at UFC 121. In this fight, Sanchez utilized his wrestling to control and punish Thiago in the second and third rounds. He also picked up Thiago and slammed him to the mat while screaming, Sanchez won the bout via unanimous decision. This win earned him the Fight of the Night award.
 - 2011 March 3 Sanchez defeated Martin Kampmann by a unanimous decision at UFC Live: Sanchez vs. Kampmann in a bout that earned Fight of the Night honors. In the

- bout, Kampmann dropped Sanchez in the first round, and continued to get the better in the exchanges but Sanchez continuously pressured Kampmann into the cage to force wild exchanges in the second and third rounds. By the end of the fight, both men were bloodied up especially Sanchez, whose face was a bloody mess. Sanchez won the fight via unanimous decision. This win earned him the Fight of the Night award.
- 2011 September 24 Sanchez was expected to face former two-time UFC Welterweight Champion and UFC Hall of Famer Matt Hughes at UFC 135. However, Sanchez had to withdraw from the bout due to a broken hand.
 - A bout between Sanchez and Jake Ellenberger was briefly linked to UFC 141. However, a lingering hand injury kept Sanchez out of action until February 2012.
 - 2012 February 15 The Ellenberger/Sanchez bout took place at UFC on Fuel TV 1. Ellenberger defeated Sanchez via unanimous decision in a bout that earned both fighters Fight of the Night honors.
- Return to Lightweight
 - 2013 March 2 Sanchez then returned to lightweight and faced Takanori Gomi at UFC on Fuel TV 8. Sanchez failed to make the 156 lb. weight limit at the weigh ins, weighing at 158 lbs. He was fined 20 percent of his earnings, and the bout was contested at a catchweight of 158 lb. Sanchez defeated Gomi via a controversial split decision. 12 of 12 media outlets scored the bout in favor of Gomi.
 - 2013 October 19 Sanchez faced Gilbert Melendez at UFC 166. He lost the fight via unanimous decision. The bout earned Sanchez his seventh Fight of the Night bonus award.
 - 2014 March 15 Sanchez faced Myles Jury at UFC 171. He lost the fight via unanimous decision.
 - 2014 June 7 Sanchez faced Ross Pearson at UFC Fight Night 42. Sanchez defeated Pearson via split decision. 14 of 14 media outlets scored the bout in favor of Pearson, 13 with scores of 30-27. UFC president Dana White indicated that the

organization will informally treat the bout as a win for Pearson and that he would be compensated with a \$30,000 win bonus.

- Sanchez was expected to face Norman Parke at UFC 180. However, Parke pulled out of the bout in early October citing a knee injury and was replaced by Joe Lauzon. However, on October 23, it was announced that injuries to both Sanchez and Lauzon led to the pairing being scrapped altogether.
- 2015 January Sanchez had surgery to repair his collarbone that was broken in training.
- 2015 November 21 After a lengthy hiatus, Sanchez returned to make his debut in the Featherweight division. He faced Ricardo Lamas at The Ultimate Fighter Latin America 2 Finale. He lost the fight by unanimous decision.
- 2016 March 5 After the one fight stint at featherweight, Sanchez returned to the lightweight division and faced Jim Miller at UFC 196. He won the fight by unanimous decision.
- 2016 July 9 Sanchez faced longtime peer Joe Lauzon at UFC 200. He lost the fight via TKO in the first round, resulting in his first TKO loss. The only previous TKO loss Sanchez had been when J. Penn stopped him with a head kick at UFC 107.
 - 2016 November 5 Sanchez fought promotional newcomer Marcin Held at The Ultimate Fighter Latin America 3 Finale. Sanchez won the fight via unanimous decision.
- 2017 April 22 Sanchez next faced Al Iaquinta at UFC Fight Night 108. He lost the fight via knockout in the first round.
- Return to Welterweight
 - 2017 November 11 Sanchez faced Matt Brown in a welterweight bout at UFC Fight Night: Poirier vs. Pettis. He lost the fight via knockout in round one.
 - 2018 September 8 Sanchez faced Craig White at UFC 228. He won the fight by unanimous decision.

- 2019 March 2 Six months later, Sanchez faced Mickey Gall at UFC 235. Sanchez won the fight via second round TKO. This marked Sanchez's first stoppage victory since 2008, it also earned him his first Performance of the Night bonus award.
- 2019 July 6 As the final fight of his prevailing contract with the UFC, Sanchez faced Michael Chiesa at UFC 239. He lost the fight via unanimous decision.
- 2019 May 28 Announced that the fight between Sanchez and Clay Guida at The Ultimate Fighter 9 Finale, where Sanchez defeated Guida by split decision, on June 20, 2009, will be honored to enter the UFC Hall of Fame during the international fight July 2019.
- 2017 December 1 at "JacksonWink MMA Fight Night 2" exhibition event Sanchez faced Isaac Marquez, a man who was born with Down syndrome who dreamed of one day competing in a real mixed martial arts bout. Sanchez helped train Marquez who dedicated the fight to his late mother who died from dementia. "Most Down syndrome adults don't live past 45." Sanchez said ahead of the bout. "Isaac is 32, and I just wanted to see this young man be healthy. Exercise and martial arts are one of the most-healthy things you can do." In a friendly spirited match Marquez defeated Sanchez with a first-round submission armbar win and received a huge ovation when Sanchez tapped out.
- First The Ultimate Fighter Tournament Winner in UFC History
- Tied (Frankie Edgar and Nate Diaz) for all-time leader in Fight of the Night Awards in UFC History (Seven).
- Tied for 7th most victories in UFC History (17)
- King of the Cage - KOTC Welterweight Championship (One time)
- The Ultimate Fighter 1 Middleweight Tournament Winner
- Fight of the Night (Seven times) vs. Karo Parisyan, Joe Stevenson, Clay Guida, Paulo Thiago, Martin Kampmann, Jake Ellenberger, Gilbert Melendez.
- Performance of the Night (One time) vs. Mickey Gall.
- 2022 November Sanchez signed with Bare Knuckle Fighting Championship . After being medically cleared to compete by the New Mexico Athletic Commission, he faced

former WBA super welterweight champion Austin Trout at BKFC: KnuckleMania 3 on February 17, 2023. Sanchez lost the bout via TKO in the 4th round due to doctor stoppage.

Honors:

- 2019 July 5 Inducted into the UFC Hall of Fame Fight Wing. Sanchez and Clay Guida were inducted into the UFC Hall of Fame fight wing for their 2009 battle against one another.
- Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) Hall of Fame (fight wing, class of 2019) vs. Clay Guida at The Ultimate Fighter: United States vs. United Kingdom Finale.
- 2006 Fight of the Year vs. Karo Parisyan on August 17.
- 2009 Fight of the Year Clay Guida on June 20.
- 2013 Fight of the Year vs. Gilbert Melendez on October 19.
- 2009 World MMA Fight of the Year vs. Clay Guida on June 20.
- 2009 MMA Bazzie Award for Fight of the Year vs. Clay Guida on June 20. 2013 MMA Bazzie Award for Fight of the Year vs. Gilbert Melendez on October 19.
- 2013 Bleacher Report MMA Fight of the Year vs. Gilbert Melendez on October 19.
- 2005 New Mexico Boxing Fighter of the Year
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